

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR”

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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IS HE POPENJOY ?

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XVI. ALL IS FISH THAT COMES
TO HIS NET.

THE dean's week up in London, during the absence of Lord George, was gay enough; but through it all and over it all there was that cloud of seriousness, which had been produced by the last news from Italy. He rode with his daughter, dined out in great state at Mrs. Montacute Jones's, talked to Mr. Houghton about Newmarket and the next Derby, had a little flirtation of his own with Hetta Houghton—into which he contrived to introduce a few serious words about the marquis—and was merry enough; but, to his daughter's surprise, he never for a moment ceased to be impressed with the importance of the Italian woman and her baby. “What does it signify, papa?” she said.

“Not signify!”

“Of course it was to be expected that the marquis should marry. Why should he not marry as well as his younger brother?”

“In the first place he is very much older.”

“As to that, men marry at any age. Look at Mr. Houghton.” The dean only smiled. “Do you know, papa, I don't think one ought to trouble about such things.”

“That's nonsense, my dear. Men, and women too, ought to look after their own interests. It is the only way in which progress can be made in the world. Of course you are not to covet what belongs

to others. You will make yourself very unhappy if you do. If Lord Brotherton's marriage were all fair and above board, nobody would say a word; but, as it has not been so, it will be our duty to find out the truth. If you should have a son, do not you think that you would turn every stone before you would have him defrauded of his rights?”

“I shouldn't think anyone would defraud him.”

“But if this child be—anything else than what he pretends to be, there will be fraud. The Germaines, though they think as I do, are frightened and superstitious. They are afraid of this imbecile who is coming over; but they shall find that if they do not move in the matter, I will. I want nothing that belongs to another; but while I have a hand and tongue with which to protect myself, or a purse—which is better than either—no one shall take from me what belongs to me.” All this seemed to Mary to be pagan teaching, and it surprised her much as coming from her father. But she was beginning to find out that she, as a married woman, was supposed to be now fit for other teaching than had been administered to her as a child. She had been cautioned in her father's house against the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and could remember the paternal, almost divine expression of the dean's face as the lesson was taught. But now it seemed to her that the pomps and vanities were spoken of in a very different way. The divine expression was altogether gone, and that which remained, though in looking at her it was always pleasant, was hardly paternal.

Miss Mildmay—Aunt Ju as she was

called—and Guss Mildmay came and called, and as it happened the dean was in the drawing-room when they came. They were known to be friends of Mrs. Houghton's who had been in Brothershire, and were therefore in some degree connected even with the dean. Guss began at once about the new marchioness and the baby; and the dean, though he did not of course speak to Guss Mildmay as he had done to his own daughter, still sneered at the mother and her child. In the meantime Aunt Ju was enlisting poor Mary. "I should be so proud if you would come with me to the Institute, Lady George."

"I am sure I should be delighted. But what Institute?"

"Don't you know?—in the Marylebone-road—for relieving females from their disabilities."

"Do you mean Rights of Women? I don't think papa likes that," said Mary, looking round at her father.

"You haven't got to mind what papa likes and dislikes any more," said the dean, laughing. "Whether you go in for the rights or the wrongs of women is past my caring for now. Lord George must look after that."

"I am sure Lord George could not object to your going to the Marylebone Institute," said Aunt Ju. "Lady Selina Protest is there every week, and Baroness Banmann, the delegate from Bavaria, is coming next Friday."

"You'd find the Disabilities awfully dull, Lady George," said Guss.

"Everybody is not so flighty as you are, my dear. Some people do sometimes think of serious things. And the Institute is not called the Disabilities."

"What is it all about?" said Mary.

"Only to empower women to take their own equal places in the world—places equal to those occupied by men," said Aunt Ju, eloquently. "Why should one-half of the world be ruled by the ipse dixit of the other?"

"Or fed by their labours?" said the dean.

"That is just what we are not. There are one million one hundred and thirty three thousand five hundred females in England—"

"You had better go and hear it all at the Disabilities, Lady George," said Guss. Lady George said that she would like to go for once, and so that matter was settled.

While Aunt Ju was pouring out the

violence of her doctrine upon the dean, whom she contrived to catch in a corner just before she left the house, Guss Mildmay had a little conversation on her own part with Lady George. "Captain De Baron," she said, "is an old friend of yours, I suppose." She, however, had known very well that Jack had never seen Lady George till within the last month.

"No, indeed; I never saw him till the other day."

"I thought you seemed to be intimate. And then the Houghtons and the De Barons and the Germains are all Brothershire people."

"I knew Mrs. Houghton's father, of course, a little; but I never saw Captain De Baron." This she said rather seriously, remembering what Mrs. Houghton had said to her of the love affair between this young lady and the captain in question.

"I thought you seemed to know him the other night, and I saw you riding with him."

"He was with his cousin Adelaide—not with us."

"I don't think he cares much for Adelaide. Do you like him?"

"Yes, I do; very much. He seems to be so gay."

"Yes, he is gay. He's a horrid flirt, you know."

"I didn't know; and what is more, I don't care."

"So many girls have said that about Captain De Baron; but they have cared afterwards."

"But I am not a girl, Miss Mildmay," said Mary, colouring, offended and resolved at once that she would have no intimacy and as little acquaintance as possible with Guss Mildmay.

"You are so much younger than so many of us who are girls," said Guss, thinking to get out of the little difficulty in that way. "And then it's all fish that comes to his net." She hardly knew what she was saying, but was anxious to raise some feeling that should prevent any increased intimacy between her own lover and Lady George. It was nothing to her whether or no she offended Lady George Germain. If she could do her work without sinning against good taste, well; but if not, then good taste must go to the wall. Good taste certainly had gone to the wall.

"Upon my word, I can hardly understand you!" Then Lady George turned

away to her father. "Well, papa, has Miss Mildmay persuaded you to come to the Institute with me?"

"I am afraid I should hardly be admitted, after what I have just said."

"Indeed you shall be admitted, Mr. Dean," said the old woman. "We are quite of the Church's way of thinking, that no sinner is too hardened for repentance."

"I am afraid the day of grace has not come yet," said the dean.

"Papa," said Lady George, as soon as her visitors were gone, "do you know I particularly dislike that younger Miss Mildmay."

"Is she worth being particularly disliked so rapidly?"

"She says nasty, impudent things. I can't quite explain what she said." And again Lady George blushed.

"People in society now do give themselves strange liberty; women, I think, more than men. You shouldn't mind it."

"Not mind it?"

"Not mind it so as to worry yourself. If a pert young woman like that says anything to annoy you, put her down at the time, and then think no more about it. Of course you need not make a friend of her."

"That I certainly should not do."

On the Sunday after this Lady George dined again with her father at Mr. Houghton's house, the dinner having been made up especially for the dean. On this occasion the Mildmays were not there; but Captain De Baron was one of the guests. But then he was Mrs. Houghton's cousin, and had the run of the house on all occasions. Again, there was no great party; Mrs. Montacute Jones was there, and Hetta—Miss Houghton, that is, whom all the world called Hetta—and Mrs. Houghton's father, who happened to be up in town. Again Lady George found herself sitting between her host and Jack De Baron, and again she thought that Jack was a very agreeable companion. The idea of being in any way afraid of him did not enter into her mind. Those horrid words which Guss Mildmay had said to her—as to all being fish for his net—had no effect of that nature. She assured herself that she knew herself too well to allow anything of that kind to influence her. That she, Lady George Germain, the daughter of the Dean of Brotherton, a married woman, should be afraid of any man,

afraid of any too close intimacy! The idea was horrible and disgusting to her. So that when Jack proposed to join her and her father in the Park on the next afternoon, she said that she would be delighted; and when he told her absurd stories of his regimental duties, and described his brother-officers who probably did not exist as described by him, and then went on to hunting legends in Buckinghamshire, she laughed at everything he said and was very merry. "Don't you like Jack?" Mrs. Houghton said to her in the drawing-room.

"Yes, I do; very much. He's just what Jack ought to be."

"I don't know about that. I suppose Jack ought to go to church twice on Sundays, and give half what he has to the poor, just as well as John."

"Perhaps he does. But Jack is bound to be amusing, while John need not have a word to say for himself."

"You know he's my pet friend. We are almost like brothers and sisters, and therefore I need not be afraid of him."

"Afraid of him! Why should anybody be afraid of him?"

"I am sure you needn't. But Jack has done mischief in his time. Perhaps he's not the sort of man that would ever touch your fancy." Again Lady George blushed, but on this occasion she had nothing to say. She did not want to quarrel with Mrs. Houghton, and the suggestion that she could possibly love any other man than her husband had not now been made in so undisguised a manner as before.

"I thought he was engaged to Miss Mildmay," said Lady George.

"Oh dear no; nothing of the kind. It is impossible, as neither of them has anything to speak of. When does Lord George come back?"

"To-morrow."

"Mind that he comes to see me soon. I do so long to hear what he'll say about his new sister-in-law. I had made up my mind that I shall have to kotou to you before long as a real live marchioness."

"You'll never have to do that."

"Not if this child is a real Lord Popenjoy? But I have my hopes still, my dear."

Soon after that Hetta Houghton reverted to the all-important subject. "You have found out that what I told you was true, Lady George."

"Oh yes—all true."

"I wonder what the dowager thinks about it."

"My husband is with his mother. She thinks, I suppose, just what we all think, that it would have been better if he had told everybody of his marriage sooner."

"A great deal better."

"I don't know whether, after all, it will make a great deal of difference. Lady Brotherton—the dowager I mean—is so thoroughly English in all her ways, that she never could have got on very well with an Italian daughter-in-law."

"The question is whether, when a man springs a wife and family on his relations in that way, everything can be taken for granted. Suppose a man had been ever so many years in Kamtchatka, and had then come back with a Kamtchatkean female, calling her his wife, would everybody take it as all gospel?"

"I suppose so."

"Do you? I think not. In the first place it might be difficult for an Englishman to get himself married in that country according to English laws, and in the next, when there, he would hardly wish to do so."

"Italy is not Kamtchatka, Miss Houghton."

"Certainly not; and it isn't England. People are talking about it a great deal, and seem to think that the Italian lady oughtn't to have a walk over."

Miss Houghton had heard a good deal about races from her brother, and the phrase she had used was quite an everyday word to her. Lady George did not understand it, but felt that Miss Houghton was talking very freely about a very delicate matter. And she remembered at the same time what had been the aspirations of the lady's earlier life, and put down a good deal of what was said to personal jealousy. "Papa," she said, as she went home, "it seems to me that people here talk a great deal about one's private concerns."

"You mean about Lord Brotherton's marriage."

"That among other things."

"Of course they will talk about that. It is hardly to be considered private. And I don't know but what the more it is talked about the better for us. It is felt to be a public scandal, and that feeling may help us."

"Oh, papa, I wish you wouldn't think that we wanted any help."

"We want the truth, my dear, and we must have it."

On the next day they met Jack De Baron in the Park. They had not been long together before the dean saw an old friend on the footpath and stopped to speak to him. Mary would have stayed too, had not her horse displayed an inclination to go on, and that she had felt herself unwilling to make an effort in the matter. As she rode on with Captain De Baron she remembered all that had been said by Guss Mildmay and Mrs. Houghton, and remembered also her own decision that nothing of that kind could matter to her. It was an understood thing that ladies and gentlemen, when riding, should fall into this kind of intercourse. Her father was with her, and it would be absurd that she should be afraid to be a minute or two out of his sight. "I ought to have been hunting," said Jack; "but there was frost last night, and I do hate going down and being told that the ground is as hard as brickbats at the kennels, while men are ploughing all over the country. And now it's a delicious spring day."

"You didn't like getting up, Captain De Baron," she said.

"Perhaps there's something in that. Don't you think getting up is a mistake? My idea of a perfect world is one where nobody would ever have to get up."

"I shouldn't at all like always to lie in bed."

"But there might be some sort of arrangement to do away with the nuisance. See what a good time the dogs have."

"Now, Captain De Baron, would you like to be a dog?" This she said, turning round and looking him full in the face.

"Your dog I would." At that moment, just over his horse's withers, she saw the face of Guss Mildmay, who was leaning on her father's arm. Guss bowed to her, and she was obliged to return the salute. Jack De Baron turned his face to the path, and seeing the lady raised his hat.

"Are you two friends?" he asked.

"Not particularly."

"I wish you were. But, of course, I have no right to wish in such a matter as that." Lady George felt that she wished that Guss Mildmay had not seen her riding in the Park on that day with Jack De Baron.

CHAPTER XVII. THE DISABILITIES.

It had been arranged that on Friday evening Lady George should call for Aunt

Ju in Green-street, and that they should go together to the Institute in the Mary-lebone-road. The real and full name of the College, as some ladies delighted to call it, was, though somewhat lengthy, placarded in big letters on a long black board on the front of the building, and was as follows: "Rights of Women Institute. Established for the Relief of the Disabilities of Females." By friendly tongues to friendly ears, the College or the Institute was the pleasant name used; but the irreverent public was apt to speak of the building generally as the Female Disabilities. And the title was made even shorter. Omnibuses were desired to stop at the Disabilities; and it had become notorious that it was just a mile from King's-cross to the Disabilities. There had been serious thoughts among those who were dominant in the Institute of taking down the big board and dropping the word. But then a change of a name implies such a confession of failure! It had on the whole been thought better to maintain the courage of the opinion which had first made the mistake. "So you're going to the Disabilities, are you?" Mrs. Houghton had said to Lady George.

"I'm to be taken by old Miss Mildmay."

"Oh yes; Aunt Ju is a sort of first-class priestess among them. Don't let them bind you over to belong to them. Don't go in for it." Lady George had declared it to be very improbable that she should go in for it, but had adhered to her determination of visiting the Institute.

She called in Green-street, fearing that she should see Guss Mildmay, whom she had determined to keep at arm's distance as well as her friendship with Mrs. Houghton would permit; but Aunt Ju was ready for her in the passage. "I forgot to tell you that we ought to be a little early, as I have to take the chair. I daresay we shall do very well," she added, "if the man drives fast. But the thing is so important! One doesn't like to be flurried when one gets up to make the preliminary address." The only public meetings at which Mary had ever been present had appertained to certain lectures at Brotherton, at which her father or some other clerical dignitary had presided, and she could not as yet understand that such a duty should be performed by a woman. She muttered something expressing a hope that all would go right.

"I've got to introduce the baroness, you know."

"Introduce the baroness?"

"The Baroness Banmann. Haven't you seen the bill of the evening? The baroness is going to address the meeting on the propriety of patronising female artists, especially in regard to architecture. A combined college of female architects is to be established in Posen and Chicago, and why should we not have a branch in London, which is the centre of the world?"

"Would a woman have to build a house?" asked Lady George.

"She would draw the plans, and devise the proportions, and—and—do the æsthetic part of it. An architect doesn't carry bricks on his back, my dear."

"But he walks over planks, I suppose?"

"And so could I walk over a plank; why not as well as a man? But you will hear what the baroness says. The worst is that I am a little afraid of her English."

"She's a foreigner, of course. How will she manage?"

"Her English is perfect, but I am afraid of her pronunciation. However, we shall see."

They had now arrived at the building, and Lady George followed the old lady in with the crowd. But when once inside the door they turned to a small passage on the left, which conducted those in authority to the august room preparatory to the platform. It is here that bashful speakers try to remember their first sentences, and that lecturers, proud of their prominence, receive the homage of the officers of the Institute. Aunt Ju, who on this occasion was second in glory, made her way in among the crowd and welcomed the baroness, who had just arrived. The baroness was a very stout woman, about fifty, with a double chin, a considerable moustache, a low broad forehead, and bright, round, black eyes, very far apart. When introduced to Lady George, she declared that she had great honour in accepting the re-cognition. She had a stout roll of paper in her hand, and was dressed in a black stuff gown, with a cloth jacket buttoned up to the neck, which hardly gave to her copious bust that appearance of manly firmness which the occasion almost required. But the virile collars, budding out over it, perhaps sup-

plied what was wanting. Lady George looked at her to see if she was trembling. How, thought Lady George, would it have been with herself if she had been called upon to address a French audience in French! But, as far as she could judge from experience, the baroness was quite at her ease. Then she was introduced by Aunt Ju to Lady Selina Protest, who was a very little woman with spectacles, of a most severe aspect. "I hope, Lady George, that you mean to put your shoulder to the wheel," said Lady Selina. "I am only here as a stranger," said Lady George. Lady Selina did not believe in strangers, and passed on very severely. There was no time for further ceremonies, as a bald-headed old gentleman, who seemed to act as chief usher, informed Aunt Ju that it was time for her to take the baroness on to the platform. Aunt Ju led the way, puffing a little, for she had been somewhat hurried on the stairs, and was not as yet quite used to the thing, but still with a proudly prominent step. The baroness waddled after her, apparently quite indifferent to the occasion. Then followed Lady Selina, and Lady George, the bald-headed gentleman telling her where to place herself. She had never been on a platform before, and it seemed as though the crowd of people below was looking specially at her. As she sat down at the right hand of the baroness, who was of course at the right hand of the chairwoman, the bald-headed gentleman introduced her to her other neighbour, Miss Doctor Olivia Q. Fleabody, from Vermont. There was so much of the name, and it all sounded so strange to the ears of Lady George, that she could remember very little of it; but she was conscious that her new acquaintance was a miss and a doctor. She looked timidly round, and saw what would have been a pretty face, had it not been marred by a pinched look of studious severity and a pair of glass spectacles, of which the glasses shone in a disagreeable manner. There are spectacles which are so much more spectacles than other spectacles, that they make the beholder feel that there is before him a pair of spectacles carrying a face, rather than a face carrying a pair of spectacles. So it was with the spectacles of Olivia Q. Fleabody. She was very thin, and the jacket and collars were quite successful. Sitting in the front row, she displayed her feet, and, it may also be said, her trousers; for the tunic which she

wore came down hardly below the knees. Lady George's enquiring mind instantly began to ask itself what the lady had done with her petticoats. "This is a great occasion," said Dr. Fleabody, speaking almost out aloud, and with a very strong nasal twang.

Lady George looked at the chair before she answered, feeling that she would not dare to speak a word if Aunt Ju were already on her legs; but Aunt Ju was taking advantage of the commotion which was still going on among those who were looking for seats to get her breath, and therefore she could whisper a reply. "I suppose it is," she said.

"If it were not that I have wedded myself in a peculiar manner to the prophylactic and therapeutic sciences, I would certainly now put my foot down firmly in the cause of architecture. I hope to have an opportunity of saying a few words on the subject myself before this interesting session shall have closed." Lady George looked at her again, and thought that this enthusiastic hybrid who was addressing her could not be more than twenty-four years old.

But Aunt Ju was soon on her legs. It did not seem to Lady George that Aunt Ju enjoyed the moment, now that it was come. She looked hot, and puffed once or twice before she spoke. But she had studied her few words so long, and had made so sure of them, that she could not go very far wrong. She assured her audience that the Baroness Baumann, whose name had only to be mentioned to be honoured both throughout Europe and America, had, at great personal inconvenience, come all the way from Bavaria to give them the advantage of her vast experience on the present occasion. Like a good chairwoman, she took none of the bread out of the baroness's mouth—as we have occasionally known it to be done on such occasions—but confined herself to ecstatic praises of the German lady. All these the baroness bore without a quiver, and when Aunt Ju sat down she stepped on to the rostrum of the evening, amidst the plaudits of the room, with a confidence which to Lady George was miraculous. Then Aunt Ju took her seat, and was able for the next hour and a half to occupy her arm-chair with gratifying fainéant dignity.

The baroness, to tell the truth, waddled rather than stepped to the rostrum. She

swung herself heavily about as she went sideways; but it was manifest to all eyes that she was not in the least ashamed of her waddling. She undid her manuscript on the desk, and flattened it down all over with her great fat hand, rolling her head about as she looked around, and then gave a grunt before she began. During this time the audience was applauding her loudly, and it was evident that she did not intend to lose a breath of their incense by any hurry on her own part. At last the voices and the hands and the feet were silent. Then she gave a last roll to her head and a last pat to the papers, and began: "De manifest infairiority of de tyrant saix—" Those first words, spoken in a very loud voice, came clearly home to Lady George's ear, though they were uttered with a most un-English accent. The baroness paused before she completed her first sentence, and then there was renewed applause. Lady George could remark that the bald-headed old gentleman behind and a cadaverous youth who was near to him were particularly energetic in stamping on the ground. Indeed, it seemed that the men were specially charmed with this commencement of the baroness's oration. It was so good that she repeated it with, perhaps, even a louder shout. "De manifest infairiority of de tyrant saix—" Lady George, with considerable trouble, was able to follow the first sentence or two, which went to assert that the inferiority of man to woman in all work was quite as conspicuous as his rapacity and tyranny in taking to himself all the wages. The baroness, though addressing a mixed audience, seemed to have no hesitation in speaking of man generally as a foul worm who ought to be put down and kept under, and merely allowed to be the father of children. But after a minute or two Lady George found that she could not understand two words consecutively, although she was close to the lecturer. The baroness, as she became heated, threw out her words quicker and more quickly, till it became almost impossible to know in what language they were spoken. By degrees our friend became aware that the subject of architecture had been reached, and then she caught a word or two as the baroness declared that the science was "adaapted only to de æstetic and comprehensive intelligence of de famale mind." But the audience applauded throughout as though every

word reached them; and when from time to time the baroness wiped her brows with a very large handkerchief, they shook the building with their appreciation of her energy. Then came a loud rolling sentence, with the old words as an audible termination, "de manifest infairiority of de tyrant saix!" As she said this she waved her handkerchief in the air and almost threw herself over the desk. "She is very great to-night—very great indeed," whispered Miss Doctor Olivia Q. Fleabody to Lady George. Lady George was afraid to ask her neighbour whether she understood one word out of ten that were being spoken.

Great as the baroness was, Lady George became very tired of it all. The chair was hard and the room was full of dust, and she could not get up. It was worse than the longest and the worst sermon she had ever heard. It seemed to her at last that there was no reason why the baroness should not go on for ever. The woman liked it, and the people applauded her. The poor victim had made up her mind that there was no hope of cessation, and in doing so was very nearly asleep, when, on a sudden, the baroness had finished and had thrown herself violently back into her chair. "Baroness, believe me," said Dr. Fleabody, stretching across Lady George, "it is the greatest treat I ever had in my life." The baroness hardly condescended to answer the compliment. She was at this moment so great a woman, at this moment so immeasurably the greatest human being at any rate in London, that it did not become her to acknowledge simple compliments. She had worked hard and was very hot, but still she had sufficient presence of mind to remember her demeanour.

When the tumult was a little subsided, Lady Selina Protest got up to move a vote of thanks. She was sitting on the left-hand side of the chair, and rose so silently that Lady George had at first thought that the affair was all over, and that they might go away. Alas, alas! there was more to be borne yet! Lady Selina spoke with a clear but low voice, and though she was quite audible, and an earl's sister, did not evoke any enthusiasm. She declared that the thanks of every woman in England were due to the baroness for her exertions, and of every man who wished to be regarded as the friend of women. But Lady Selina was very quiet, making no ges-

tures, and was indeed somewhat flat. When she sat down no notice whatever was taken of her. Then very quickly, before Lady George had time to look about her, the doctor was on her feet. It was her task to second the vote of thanks, but she was far too experienced an occupant of platforms to waste her precious occasion simply on so poor a task. She began by declaring that never in her life had a duty been assigned to her more consonant to her taste than that of seconding a vote of thanks to a woman so eminent, so humanitarian, and at the same time so essentially a female as the Baroness Banmann. Lady George, who knew nothing about speaking, felt at once that here was a speaker who could at any rate make herself audible and intelligible. Then the doctor broke away into the general subject, with special allusions to the special matter of female architecture, and went on for twenty minutes without dropping a word. There was a moment in which she had almost made Lady George think that women ought to build houses. Her dislike to the American twang had vanished, and she was almost sorry when Miss Doctor Fleabody resumed her seat.

But it was after that—after the baroness had occupied another ten minutes in thanking the British public for the thanks that had been given to herself—that the supreme emotion of the evening came to Lady George. Again she had thought, when the baroness a second time rolled back to her chair, that the time for departure had come. Many in the hall, indeed, were already going, and she could not quite understand why no one on the platform had as yet moved. Then came that bald-headed old gentleman to her, to her very self, and suggested to her that she—she, Lady George Germain, who the other day was Mary Lovelace, the Brother-ton girl—should stand up and make a speech! “There is to be a vote of thanks to Miss Mildmay as chairwoman,” said the bald-headed old man, “and we hope, Lady George, that you will favour us with a few words.”

Her heart utterly gave way and the blood flew into her cheeks, and she thoroughly repented of having come to this dreadful place. She knew that she could not do it, though the world were to depend upon it; but she did not know whether the bald-headed old gentleman might not have the right of

insisting on it. And then all the people were looking at her as the horrible old man was pressing his request over her shoulder. “Oh,” she said; “no, I can’t. Pray don’t. Indeed I can’t; and I won’t.” The idea had come upon her that it was necessary that she should be very absolute. The old man retired meekly, and himself made the speech in honour of Aunt Ju.

As they were going away, Lady George found that she was to have the honour of conveying the baroness to her lodgings in Conduit-street. This was all very well, as there was room for three in the brougham, and she was not ill-pleased to hear the ecstasies of Aunt Ju about the lecture. Aunt Ju declared that she had agreed with every word that had been uttered. Aunt Ju thought that the cause was flourishing. Aunt Ju was of opinion that women in England would, before long, be able to sit in Parliament, and practise in the Law Courts. Aunt Ju was thoroughly in earnest; but the baroness had expended her energy in the lecture, and was more inclined to talk about persons. Lady George was surprised to hear her say that this young man was a very handsome young man, and that old man a very nice old man. She was almost in love with Mr. Spuffin, the bald-headed gentleman usher; and when she was particular in asking whether Mr. Spuffin was married, Lady George could hardly think that this was the woman who had been so eloquent on the “infairiority of de tyrant saix.”

But it was not till Aunt Ju had been dropped in Green-street, and the conversation fell upon Lady George herself, that the difficulty began. “You no speak?” asked the baroness.

“What, in public! Not for the world!”

“You wrong dere. Noting so easy. Say just as you please, only say it vera loud. And always abuse somebody or someting. You s’ould try.”

“I would sooner die,” said Lady George. “Indeed, I should be dead before I could utter a word. Isn’t it odd how that lady doctor could speak like that?”

“De American young woman! Dey have de impudence of—of—of everyting you please; but it come to noting.”

“But she spoke well.”

“Dear me, no; noting at all. Dere was noting but vords, vords, vords. Tank you; here I am. Mind you come again, and you shall learn to speak.”

Lady George, as she was driven home, was lost in her inability to understand it all. She had thought that the doctor spoke the best of all, and now she was told that it was nothing. She did not yet understand that even people so great as female orators, so nobly humanitarian as the Baroness Bannmann, can be jealous of the greatness of others.

OLD FRENCH ACTORS.

MOLÉ.

DURING a long series of years, from 1729 to the commencement of the present century, the Théâtre Français successively possessed, as the representatives of what is usually termed high comedy, four actors of consummate ability, namely: Grandval, Bellecour, Molé, and Fleury. Of these, the two first may be said to have principally excelled in the personation of characters demanding a certain majesty of demeanour and courtly distinction of tone; whereas their successors—and more particularly the subject of our notice—were chiefly indebted for their popularity to the no less attractive qualities of refinement, elegance, and grace. Since the death of Fleury, the exquisite perfection of detail, which formerly rendered the types of *petit-maitre* and *marquis* leading features in French comedy, has become a thing of the past; neither Menjaud—an admirable speaker, but an ungainly representative of nobility—nor, in our own day, Bressant—who never could quite shake off the effects of his long apprenticeship on minor boards—having, in their respective delineations of the ancient *répertoire*, in any way added to their reputation. This falling off may, it is true, be to some extent accounted for by the fact that, with the exception of Marivaux and the *Turcaret* of Le Sage, the ordinary stock-pieces of the theatre offer few opportunities to an actor desirous of emulating his great predecessors in the art of wearing the habit à la Française, and of displaying his address in “the nice conduct of a clouded cane;” such comedies as *L’Inconstant* and *Le Cercle*, the favourable reception of which was mainly attributable to the talent of their principal interpreter, whose career we purpose attempting to describe, having hitherto escaped the perils of a posthumous revival.

François René Molé was born in Paris, November 24, 1734; his father, an engraver by profession, but according to all

accounts of moderate ability, was with difficulty enabled from his scanty earnings to provide the means of subsistence for his wife and three sons, of whom our hero was the second. The family name was originally Molet, and it was not until several years after his reception at the Comédie Française, that the actor, for the sake of euphony, changed it to Molé, by the simple suppression of the final letter, and the addition of an accent. This alteration gave rise to an absurd report that he claimed the honour of descending from the illustrious magistrate, Mathieu Molé, upon which his comrade Dagazon laughingly remarked that, while he was about it, he had better have declared himself a descendant of Jaques du Molay, Grand Master of the Templars; adding, that the nobility of the sword was a hundred times preferable to that of the law-courts. Of Molé’s early youth little is known, but he appears to have been for a short period employed in a notary’s office, previous to his engagement as clerk by M. Blondel de Gagny, a financial magnate of the day. His passion for the stage, however, interfered considerably with the routine of his duties, and his stolen visits to the theatre only served to fan the flame. It is asserted that his employer, entering unexpectedly the room where the young man was supposed to be at work, found him perched on the table, the cloth of which served as a tragic mantle, and declaiming to a row of chairs, representing the audience, whatever scraps of the ancient *répertoire* he could recollect; imitating, more or less correctly, the tone and gestures of the actors he had seen. Luckily for Molé, M. Blondel de Gagny was no martinet; amused rather than displeased by the incident, he encouraged his stage-struck clerk to proceed with his performance, and imagining that he could discern in the crude essays of the inexperienced enthusiast a germ of real talent which only needed cultivation, recommended him to devote himself entirely to the study of the drama, kindly offering to continue the payment of his salary, without exacting any services in return. By this unhopèd-for stroke of good fortune, Molé was enabled to frequent the society of the leading artistes of the day, and we shortly after find him enrolled, together with Lekain, in a company of amateurs, where his success was so decisive, that although he was not yet twenty years old, and had not gone through the usual provincial apprenticeship, the special

favour of a début at the Théâtre Français was at once accorded to him.

His first appearance there took place on the 7th of November, 1754, as *Britannicus* in Racine's tragedy of that name, and as *Olinde* in *Zéneïde*; and he subsequently played *Seïde* and *Nérestan*. His attractive exterior, and the unstudied grace of his manner, obtained for him an indulgent reception, and the *Mercur* de France, then edited by the Abbé Raynal, alluded in flattering terms to the promise held out by him; but it was generally allowed that his voice was weak, and that he was deficient in that indispensable assurance which a practical acquaintance with the business of the stage could alone supply. Convinced of the justice of these remarks, Molé quitted the capital, and for nearly five years remained in the provinces, performing successively at Lyons, Toulouse, and Marseilles. He then returned to Paris, and reappeared at the Comédie Française on January 28, 1760, in the character of *Andronic*. As on the former occasion, he was no doubt in a great measure indebted to his face and figure for the favour with which he was received; but it was soon found that during his absence he had acquired other more essential claims to the attention of connoisseurs. His voice had become materially stronger, his natural intelligence had ripened into comparative maturity, and, barring a certain stiffness of manner peculiarly noticeable in provincial actors, he trod the stage with confidence and ease. Such was Molé at this early period of his career. His progress towards perfection must have been indeed rapid, for seven years later he had attained the summit of his profession, and was justly regarded as one of the most brilliant ornaments of the first theatre in Europe.

Definitively admitted as a member of the society in 1761, he obtained a step in advance in the following year by the retirement of Grandval, in consequence of which Bellecour was left in possession of the leading characters in comedy, Molé being next in succession. About this time the latter achieved a signal triumph by his spirited performance of a young officer in *Heureusement*, a pleasant little trifle by Rochon de Chabannes; and by the charm of his manner, as well as by the graceful vivacity of his acting, not only enraptured the lady portion of the audience, but at once established himself in the favour of the general public, as the best repre-

sentative of the line of parts technically called "*les amoureux*" that had been seen for many a day. In 1763 he mainly contributed to the success of Collé's *Dupnis et Desronais* and La Harpe's *Warwick*, and in 1764 eclipsed all his former efforts by his brilliant creation of the marquis in Poinsinet's *Cercle*. Never before or since, according to the unanimous testimony of his contemporaries, did he appear to greater advantage than on this occasion. During the long run of the piece the theatre was crowded to excess, Molé's name was in everyone's mouth, and even the *petits-mâtres* did not disdain to copy the airs and graces of so incomparable a model.

On the production of Sedaine's comedy, *Le Philosophe sans le Savoir*, in 1765, the part of Vanderk the younger was entrusted to Molé, who made it the object of special study, and was rewarded by an increase of popularity, which in the ensuing year was still further augmented by the announcement of his being seriously ill. Attacked by a severe inflammation of the chest, he was for some months in imminent danger, and, until the unfavourable symptoms had in some degree abated, the anxiety of his admirers knew no bounds. Both in Paris and at Versailles the state of his health was a common topic of conversation; bulletins reporting the slightest change in his condition were regularly exhibited at the theatre and at his own house, and so numerous were the visitors who came to make their enquiries in person, that the street where he lived was often completely blocked up by equipages. Even Louis the Fifteenth, contrary to his wont, caught the infection, and as a distinguishing mark of his interest in the invalid, sent him, by one of the gentlemen of the royal chamber, two "*gratifications*" of fifty louis each.

At length Molé was pronounced to be convalescent, but so weak that, in the opinion of the faculty, a considerable interval must necessarily elapse before he could with safety reappear on the stage. Meanwhile his strength must be kept up, and his table supplied with the very best wine that could possibly be procured. Hardly had this ultimatum been bruited abroad, when the cellars of his patrons were eagerly ransacked by their owners in search of the choicest nectar of Burgundy and Bordeaux; couriers were despatched in all directions for the express purpose of outbidding rival emissaries at any cost,

and it is said that in one day no fewer than two thousand bottles of the rarest vintages were delivered at his door. While, with the aid of these manifold stimulants, the patient was slowly recovering, Nicolet, the manager of the Gaité, profiting by the circumstance, attracted crowds to his theatre by the exhibition of a monkey, attired in a dressing-gown and slippers, and trained to imitate the attitudes and gestures of the popular comedian. This novel spectacle was alluded to by the Chevalier de Boufflers in a series of couplets, the first of which runs as follows:

Quel est ce gentil animal
Qui dans les jours de carnaval
Tourne à Paris toutes les têtes,
Et pour qui l'on donne des fêtes?
Ce ne peut être que Molet,
Ou le singe de Nicolet.

When M. de Boufflers wrote this, he scarcely anticipated that the object of his satire would be one day his colleague as a member of the Institute of France.

After an absence of five months, during which, notwithstanding the combined talents of Lekain, Préville, Bellecour, and their feminine auxiliaries, the receipts of the Théâtre Français had dwindled down to their minimum, Molé finally reappeared, February 10, 1767; and we learn from an eye-witness that a week before the appointed day every box in the house was taken, and on the opening of the doors so determined a struggle for admission ensued, that "the majority of the spectators who succeeded in forcing their way through the mass left their wigs, hats, and a portion of their coats behind them." The entrance of the favourite was the signal for a tremendous shout of welcome, which re-echoed for several minutes; whereupon, after respectfully demanding permission of the Countess de la Marche and the Princess de Lamballe, who were present, he delivered a short speech expressive of his gratitude, which was received with "a hurricane of applause." Nor was this all. A performance for his benefit was subsequently organised on the private stage of the Baron d'Esclapont. The price of the tickets was fixed at a louis, and as the theatre could only contain six hundred persons, the demand for them far exceeded the supply. The most illustrious members of the court, including princes and princesses of the blood royal, marshals of France, and even

the Archbishop of Lyons (Cardinal de Rohan) and the Bishop of Blois, were among the subscribers; and so liberal were the offerings of these aristocratic amateurs that the total proceeds of the evening amounted to a very large sum—which, it was whispered, Molé devoted to the purchase of jewels as a present to his mistress; but this part of the story needs confirmation. The pieces given were *Zelmire* and *L'Époux par Superchérie*. In the tragedy *Mdlle. Clairon*, although retired from the stage, volunteered to represent the heroine; and her reappearance on this occasion gave rise to the following couplet, attributed, like its predecessors, to the Chevalier de Boufflers:

La digne et sublime Clairon
De la fille d'Agamemnon
A changé l'urne en tire-lire,
Et dans la pitié qu'elle inspire,
Va partout quêtant pour Molet,
A la cour et chez Nicolet.

Naturally, this misplaced enthusiasm met with its due share of ridicule, and the Marquis de Bièvre, never behindhand with a pun, exercised his wit unsparingly on so promising a subject; one of his best jokes was the exclamation on hearing of the actor's illness. "Molé est malade; quelle fatalité!" (quel fat alité).

In 1768, this celebrated artist gave a striking proof of the versatility of his talent, by his admirable performance of *Beverley* in a French version, by Saurin, of *The Gamester*; the final scene of this lugubrious drama, in which he is represented in prison, and on the point of committing suicide, has been engraved, if we remember rightly, by Saint-Aubin. As a contrast, he undertook, a few months later, the part of a lively young villager in *Hylas et Silvie*, and in the following year ensured the triumphant success of *L'Orphelin Anglais*, by the pathos and energy of his acting. It would be needless to enumerate the variety of characters played by him from this period until 1778, when the death of Bellecour placed him in the position of leading actor in comedy, and entitled him, moreover, to a certain share of the tragic répertoire; a mention, however, of *L'Amant Bourru*, the author of which was his comrade Monvel, must not be omitted. So perfect was Molé's conception of the principal personage, that Monvel, between whom and his interpreter a want of cordiality had for some time existed, made the first step towards a recon-

ciliation, and they were better friends than ever.

At the annual closing of the theatre in the same year, the delivery of the complimentary address was entrusted to Molé; this task was rendered more than ordinarily difficult owing to the presence of Voltaire, whose goodwill it was deemed necessary to conciliate by a few laudatory allusions. This speech, although severely criticised by La Harpe as being prosy and ungrammatical, was well received by the public. In 1781, the revival of Corneille's *Nicomède* afforded our hero an opportunity of displaying his powers in tragedy, but the attempt was a decided failure; nor was he more successful in the *Pyrrhus of Crébillon*, a part originally created many years before by Quinault Dufresne. The result of these essays convinced him that classical tragedy was not his forte,* and resigning, though reluctantly, the sceptre of Melpomene to his young comrade Larive, he devoted himself henceforward exclusively to that particular branch of comedy in which he was by common consent unrivalled. Shortly after, M. de Bièvre made amends for his former witticisms by writing expressly for him *Le Séducteur*, and generously presented him with his own share of the receipts, which ultimately amounted to ten thousand livres. During the run of this piece Molé, when paying a visit to the author, apologised for his indifferent acting on the previous evening, on account of his having been hoarse—*enroué*. "En roué!" retorted the incorrigible punster, "that is exactly what you ought to be!"

The testimony of contemporary writers, with regard to the merits of the illustrious comedian, is, except in one solitary instance, highly favourable; Collé alone, who, by-the-way, should have remembered how deeply he was indebted to Molé for the success of *Dupuis et Desronais*, differing, according to his invariable custom, from the general verdict. "Molé," he says, "has become unbearable in comedy, in drama, and above all in tragedy. He has taken it into his head to force his voice, and plays every character like a madman. Were it not for his exagge-

ration, he might have excelled in juvenile tragedy; as it is, he is completely spoilt." In another passage of his journal his tone is somewhat milder. "To do him justice, I own that Molé is an agreeable actor, but he will never be a great one."

Horace Walpole, writing to Conway, November 12, 1774, says: "Molé is charming in genteel or in pathetic comedy, and would be fine in tragedy if he was stronger;" and Madame Le Brun, in her *Recollections*, confesses that she has seen "few actors gifted with so versatile and, above all, so seductive a talent." The portrait given of him by his comrade and successor Fleury is even more flattering: "He was the most complete personification of youth, grace, and vivacity, and I thought him never more attractive than when his memory failed him and he was at a loss for a word; he had then a certain way of arranging his shirt-frill, taking out his snuff-box, and playing with his sword-knot, that was absolutely delicious. So universal a favourite was he with both sexes, as to be called the conqueror of all wives and the friend of all their husbands."

Notwithstanding his extraordinary popularity, however, he was not omnipotent behind the scenes; for we learn from a curious unpublished letter addressed to the managing committee, but without date (probably about 1784), that he had in vain solicited the reception of his protégé Marsy. After complaining that an hour and a quarter's entreaties, backed by all the influence of the *Maréchal de Duras*, had not succeeded in inducing them to reconsider their determination, he says: "I have served the theatre for twenty-three years like a galley-slave, and I ask by way of recompense and as a favour what I should be justified in demanding as a right." This appeal likewise failed in shaking the resolution of the dramatic tribunal, Marsy being unanimously rejected. His protector was subsequently more fortunate in his pupils, three of whom—Mdlles. Fanier, Doligny, and Candaille—ranked among the most agreeable actresses of the *Comédie Française*; while a fourth, Madame Chéron, obtained a similar success at the opera. For his services as professor of declamation he received a yearly pension of one thousand livres, dating from 1766.

Molé was extremely vain of his person, and so devoted an admirer of the fair sex,

* Nevertheless, he occasionally produced a great effect on the audience, for it is recorded that, while playing *Arès* in *Blin de Sainmore's Orphanis*, the expression of his countenance was so terrible, as to cause a spectator in the pit to start up and exclaim, "Spare him! for Heaven's sake, spare him!"

that when under the influence of some new passion, which was perpetually occurring, he neglected the most important matters, as trifles comparatively unworthy of a moment's consideration; the principal sufferers by this unpunctuality being the authors of dramatic novelties who were anxious to secure him for their interpreter. One of these victims was Collin d'Harleville, then a young man, who, having obtained an introduction to the comedian, expressed a desire to read to him his piece, *L'Inconstant*, which he had just completed. Molé was all smiles and goodwill, and a day was fixed for the rendezvous; but on arriving at the appointed hour the dramatist found that the bird had already flown, and returning home in dudgeon told his friend what had happened. By the aid of the latter another meeting was arranged with a similar result, and this state of things went on for several months, until Collin, losing patience, invaded one evening the actor's dressing-room at the theatre, and reproached him bitterly for his conduct. "My good sir," replied Molé, "what you say is perfectly correct, and I owe you a thousand apologies; but were I to make a dozen appointments with you just now I should most certainly miss them all. Your only chance is to catch me at my toilette, and then I promise to listen to your piece." Collin took the hint, and two days after *L'Inconstant* was read and approved in the presence of Molé and his valet de chambre; the one reclining on a luxuriously-cushioned sofa, while the other was engaged in putting his master's hair in curl-papers.

Now and then the fascinating lady-killer met his match, and one instance is cited in which he assuredly did not come off with flying colours. He had promised an author to read a comedy expressly intended for him, and received in due time what appeared to be the manuscript, neatly tied up with a sky-blue ribbon. Naturally the roll remained unopened, and on each succeeding application for a speedy decision the writer was put off with promises, until Mole himself, wearied by the constant importunities of his visitor, gave him back his property exactly as it had been delivered to him, saying that he had read the piece and regretted that it was unsuitable. Far from being contented with this declaration, the dramatist persisted in demanding what particular faults were imputed to his comedy, in order that, if possible, they might be corrected; and

was informed in reply that the plot was insignificant, the dialogue tedious, and the dénouement unsatisfactory; upon which he coolly untied the ribbon, and with a low bow presented to the astonished and mortified comedian a roll of blank paper. This anecdote became afterwards the subject of a little comedy, entitled *La Matinée du Comédien de Persépolis*, in which Molé, much to his annoyance, was amusingly caricatured under the name of Belval. He had, in truth, as instinctive a dislike to playwrights of every description as Nestor Roqueplan, the manager of the *Variétés* thirty years ago, had to vaudevillists; * but this did not prevent him from entering the lists himself in 1781 as author of *Le Quiproquo*, a trifling sketch which obtained a short run of five nights.

During the Reign of Terror, when several actors of the *Comédie Française* were arrested and thrown into prison, Molé by some lucky chance escaped proscription. He was, however, subsequently compelled, from want of resources, to accept an engagement in the company formed by Mdle. Montansier, and even to play *Marat* in a revolutionary drama called *Les Catalinas modernes*. After the fall of Robespierre, he rejoined the majority of his old comrades at the *Théâtre Feydeau*, where, as a compensation for the loss of his pension and private fortune, a benefit was accorded him, the receipts of which exceeded thirty thousand livres, the performances consisting of *Les Trois Sultanes* and *L'Amant Bourru*. His last appearance on the stage was in his favourite character *Le Vieux Célibataire*. In the course of the following night he was attacked by a sudden illness, which, notwithstanding occasional symptoms of amelioration, eventually proved fatal; and, after lingering for some months in the greatest agony, which he bore with extreme fortitude, he expired December 11, 1802, in his sixty-ninth year. The death of this great artist, although not unexpected, excited a profound sensation; his funeral was attended by an immense multitude, including the entire body of the *Comédie Française*, Monvel and Fleury at their head, as well as a deputation from the Institute, of which he was a member. A year later a performance, organised by the leading theatres of the capital for the benefit of his daughter,

* On being asked by a friend, who was aware of his antipathy, why he did not write pieces himself, Nestor retorted indignantly, "Why don't you black your own boots?"

Madame Raymond, was given at the Porte St. Martin.

Molé married, in 1769, Mlle. Hélène Pinet, better known by her stage name D'Epinay, an actress more remarkable for beauty than talent, who appeared at the Théâtre Français in 1761, and died in 1783. Of Molé's two brothers, both of whom had also embraced the dramatic profession, it need only be said that the elder, Molé d'Alainville, after two unsuccessful appearances in Paris, became ultimately manager of the Rouen Theatre; whereas Auguste, the younger, less ambitious, remained all his life a provincial actor.

CHRISTMAS.

How shall we keep our Christmas, you and I?
'Tis many a Yule-tide since we two together
Heard childish laughters blending merrily;
When the chill sunlight gleamed through wintry
weather,

When drifts lay deep around the old red house,
And arch and roof were gay with holly boughs.

And many a Yule since (dear, do you forget?)
You chose a spray all brightly berried over,
And as its leaves amid my curls you set,
Spoke in the first soft whisper of the lover,
And as the haze from girlish fondness swept,
The woman's heart from trance unconscious leapt.

Then just another Christmas, hand in hand,
Troth-plighted, we two heard the midnight chime,
And knew your path lay in a far-off land,
And smiled, in youth's gay fearlessness, at time;
Easy to wait, with love and life so strong,
Easy to wait! but oh, the years are long!

How shall I keep my Christmas? here at home
I smooth my braids—there's gray amid the gold—
I wear no holly now. The children come
And clamour for the merry sports of old;
I join the dancers, lead the carol strains:
They scarce can echo in Australian plains.

How do you keep your Christmas? Strange suns
abine,

Strange flowers blossom, brighter than our hollies;
Perhaps you bend to rosier lips than mine,
And make them smile at antique English follies!
Letters come rarer, words grow cold and few;
Broad leagues of sea and land 'twixt me and you.

Dear, do I wrong you? Life is hard and short,
Fortune is coy and chill, time flies so fast;
Wiser, perhaps, the passing rays to court,
Nor hoard our all of sunshine in the past;
Women will cling to dying dreams, you see,
And memory keeps my Christmas-day with me.

BOARD-SCHOOL BABIES.

THE YOUNGEST BORN OF THEM.

To one set enquiry necessary to be made by Board-school visitors, and others interested in securing regular attendance at schools of scholars, there keeps coming, in a high percentage of cases, but one set reply.

The little dialogue runs thus:

Q. Why has not Jinny Jones been to school lately? I have come to know.

A. I've been obliged to keep her at home, sir, because I've wanted her to—mind the baby.

The visitor may step to the next door—which is, literally, to the door on the other side of the landing; the visitor may mount to the floor above, knocking first at the front room and then at the back; the visitor may mount still higher, to the attics; or go down again low into the underground kitchen—it being the rule, unhappily, in metropolitan dwellings, that each and every one of these doors closes in a homestead; and though the visitor will at times be told of individual illness, of “no boots,” of other valid causes, it is pretty nearly always on the repetition of his question that he is met by the repetition of the answer too. At first this regular reply, and the state of things it indicated, seemed odd. It was like an anniversary, ever compelled in its period to return. But it could not stop at oddity. Being there, something had to be done with it; and the difficulty rose, how should it be taken?

Now, the School Board for London—to the action of which this present sketch happens alone to refer—having been established to solve the problem of how to do the work it was set to do, and having absolutely at heart the full desire and intention to solve the problem, gave to this unexpected and puzzling matter its serious consideration. Is Jinny Jones obliged to mind the baby? In that lay consideration No. 1.—Cannot mothers mind their own babies? Or, from another side, cannot babies mind themselves? Debates lingered over the points, sub-committees sat, reports were drawn up, debates were renewed, members waxed controversial and philosophical, amendments were proposed, meetings were adjourned. Taking the consideration, Cannot mothers mind their own babies?—into which, at last, the others merge—it was seen that working mothers have to do the family washing, the family cooking, the family cleaning—if they are mothers worthy of the name; it was seen, moreover, that it must be awkward to do family washing—the same being an operation that implies standing at a steaming wash-tub, pouring out boiling water, much rubbing, scrubbing, rinsing, and other active muscular mysteries—if, at the same time, there be the inconvenience of a baby lying in the arms, or of

a toddling baby ever running into danger at the knee. And it was further seen that mothers have sometimes to leave home to do some other family's washing, some other family's cooking, some other family's cleaning—have to go out, in short, to do that bit of work that must be done to eke out weeks' incomes, and bring the means of providing rent and food and firing somewhat level with the rent and food and firing requisite—and that in any or all of these cases, for mothers to have anything to do with their own babies is entirely impossible. When these hard and plain facts had, not without sympathy, been recognised, the School Board members found themselves driven in a corner. Common sense was let to walk in and take full possession; it had its supremacy established, and a remedy was proposed.

There should be a room set aside at a given Board school, in which scholars might leave their babies as they passed to their classes; in which babies should be perfectly taken care of by an appointed nurse; out of which scholars should fetch their babies when it was twelve o'clock of mornings, when it was half-past four o'clock of afternoons, and the scholars had finished their lessons in their classes, and were going home.

"Just a crèche!" hasty-headed people will cry: they who have only caught the outline of the decision, and have not given patience to the details.

But these people are wrong. A Board-school baby-room is not a crèche, and does not fulfil the purpose of a crèche. At a crèche, babies need be no more than three weeks old—that is no exaggeration, there are thousands of mothers in the metropolis who have been driven to stand all day at the wash-tub, or its equivalent, when their babies have been only three weeks born. At a crèche, babies are received for a long, uninterrupted day of twelve hours; babies are fed with warm food out of bottles, are put to sleep in swinging cradles, are rocked in comforting arms, are charged for at the rate in most places of threepence a day, making eighteenpence a week—which is cheap, even then; or, in other rarer spots, at only twopence daily, making the smaller fee weekly of one shilling. Besides, at a crèche anybody's baby is admissible—provided the mother come properly recommended. It may be a young wife's first pledge, brought in because necessity forces her to earn her living, and she cannot

earn a living and dandle a baby too. It may be the last little Benjamin of an experienced matron, all the rest of whose flock are grown up and gone away. In either case the little nursing may be carried in; the proper pence are paid for it, and in its tiny citizenship all things are free. But in no case at a Board-school baby-room, let it be fully noted, could any such baby gain admittance; and, in addition, every other circumstance is changed. There is the price—it is one penny for the whole of the five days that make up the Government scholastic week. There are the hours—they are strictly cut up and divided into school attendances; from a quarter to nine to noon, and from two till half-past four, with the proper scholastic interval of two hours for dinner. There is the baby's age—it must be weaned, poor mite; it must be just able to rear itself upon its uncertain little legs, if only by the help of the table or a chair. There is the food—it must be nothing liquid, wanting hand-feeding or warming on a fire; it must be only bread and butter, bread and treacle, bread and dripping, dry bread, plain; something that can be held in the little fist, more as comfort and occupation, that in no sense can take the place of a regular meal. There is, above all, the limitation—it is the rigid and unfailing law that no baby is eligible unless the Jinny or Johnny who would have minded it is on the regular roll of the school; would have been kept away from school to do the minding; will go straightway to his or her place in the school, directly the baby-room door has been opened on application, and the incommoding little baby has been left. And is it not clear, in every item of these, how all rivalry with crèches is avoided? Had any institution, of any name, existed, indeed, that was doing the work of the Board-school baby-room, the thought of rate-paid babies' rooms would never have occurred, the establishment of them need never have been discussed. To sum them up in their entirety, their intention is to do the nurse-work that school-girls and school-boys under thirteen are put to do; is to do it only for just as long as the school hours of these school-girls and school-boys continue. When it comes to playtime, jurisdiction is over; Jinny's and Johnny's play has to be "baby" again, and Jinny and Johnny have to do it. Scholars so young do not—or ought not—to have the charge of an absolute in-

fant; they could not feed it, they could not tend it for any length of time, if there be the intention to keep it alive; by the School Board for London, therefore, absolute infants could have no recognition. But the nurse-work of scholars so young may be allowed—under stress—to be the charge of little short-coated creatures, with a few teeth in them, with a little toddling power in them, with a little chatter, with a little show of individual sense and will, with a just-developed faculty to enjoy abstraction over a toy. As a fact, all working-class elder brothers and sisters would have to mind babies of this kind, off and on at intervals, on most of the days they live, from baby-waking time till the late lamplight, when working-class babies are put to bed; and just as far as these the duty of the Board was clear. It would take such little creatures during the few hours daily when elder brothers and sisters must attend their classes, when standards have to be worked up to, when there is forced to be some endeavour to obtain results. Cutting the tie of baby thus far, though, the Board would have to leave what might happen previous to those hours, or in between them, or after they were passed. Did any difficulty exist—it was a difficulty, in legal parlance, not before the court.

Here, then, is the rapid statement of the *raison d'être* of a baby-room in a Board school, of its aim and scope, of its most salutary limit. We must step inside now, with the intention of seeing and chronicling its working.

Babies are crawling, babies are on the run, babies are trotting, toddling, standing, sitting; they are on the floor, on the low benches, on the easy gallery, on tiny Windsor chairs. But where can there be a beginning? Where shall be put the first stroke, to dot down some tiny figure and fit it, to give the true notes and tune of some little joyful crow? There are twenty-nine tiny men and women in all, twenty-nine lissome little bodies, twenty-nine pairs of venturesome little legs, twenty-nine pairs of eager and exploratory little arms; more eager and exploratory lesser hands and thumbs and fingers than there can be quick mastery of; twenty-nine exultant and incessantly-used little baby throats. Can there be comprehension of the puzzle of it, and comprehension of the noise? Stay—a small alteration must be made, as far as sound and movement are concerned. That

figure twenty-nine must be written one less—twenty-eight; for the youngest baby of the whole is fast asleep. It is a tiny and feeble babykin, only fifteen or sixteen months old, unable to hold its own against shouting and careering bits of comrades half a year its seniors; so it has been laid, safe from short hits, and short runs, and shorter tumbles, on a low bed made flat upon the floor. This is called a fold—the name having nice association with young lambs being put to shelter. It is legless, postless; it is a great five or six feet square padded oasis or elysium, guarded by a surrounding wooden rail or fence, too close to be crept through, and too high for little legs to scale; and into it the small piece of humanity has been put, its pinched little face still enough, its pale and too flaccid little limbs thoroughly in repose. Yet, after all, is there much conceivable difference between the din and clamour of twenty-eight babies, and the din and clamour of twenty-nine? Does the expert live, able to give testimony, upon the instant, that twenty-nine babies are not vociferating in a given place, that an error has been made, and that there are only twenty-eight? It is not credible, easily, with the babble about us here. There is a distracting variety among these babies, a diversity of interests to be found in this baby-room, which to the lover of infantine humanity is little short of bewildering.

Thus, if we stoop here, to pat a group of little curly pates, or give a touch to a dozen of little chubby hands, there is a counter attraction over there, in a row of little upturned faces that have no shy withdrawal in them, but ever so much welcome in their sharp round eyes. Thus, again, if we move across the room, to find out why a cluster of Lilliputian figures is so intent and chattery on some treasure-trove rolling upon the floor, there is the need to tread back to the doorway the very instant, to have the fun of a set of baby-intellects making a new discovery, and to see which way it goes. It makes it a difficulty to look from the babies busy crawling up the gallery's first step, to the babies busy sitting and shuffling to transport themselves down. It makes it a difficulty to look from the babies busy bumping their little fists upon the desks, to the babies busy, with very considerable baby energy, bumping other little babies' heads. And so many opposing duties or inclinations spring up, too, to double the difficulties and the bewilderment as the eyes go round

and round. There comes the feeling, for one to be mentioned, that all the ill-used and beseeching little babies must be taken up and kissed; there comes the feeling that all the bellicose little babies must be talked to, and tickled, and told they are little rogues. To stop this the knowledge presses itself upon attention that babies, no matter how small and young, take up room—that it is impossible, therefore, to nurse many more than a pair at once; and to stop this also, from the other view, comes the knowledge that reproof—and fun mingled—had better be left to those who hold the power, since they know best how much reproof can be borne by such strange little folks as these. Still, see! this hard toy horse-trunk will be hurled crash down on the top of this little creature's head!

But the nurse is as rapid as she should be.

"Tommy, Tommy!" she cries, as she gives a saving spring. "Naughty little Tommy!" And in the motherliness of her, and her express-speed readiness, she slaps Tommy's aggressive little hand, which shoots the horse-barrel out of it, harmless, and lets his intended little victim go on her way, still crooning her baby-happiness, unconscious and serene.

Consider, however, that nurse's wickedness—according to School Board laws and penalties. She had inflicted corporal punishment; she had inflicted it herself; she had inflicted it at the very moment of the commission of the contributory crime! It is grave; in every clause of it. For it was quite open to that nurse to have waited for the peripatetic flagellator, it has been jocosely proposed that all School Board school-officials should wait for. It was quite open to that nurse to have had London School Board law well in her head. This enacts that there is to be no corporal punishment, except in the rarest of rare cases; that the infliction of it is the function of the chief official only; that it is to be administered at a certain appointed time, when all vengeance, indignation, and so on, shall have had good chance of cooling down. More. This law enacts, after many resolutions, after much discussion, that a record is to be made of every hit, slap, blow, or any other punishment imposed or given; and it may be here stated—boldly—that so far from that nurse fulfilling this last proviso, it is believed that, even if the books of the recording angels could be searched, there would not

be any entry revealed of her high offence, anywhere!

But the knottiness of this point, even when seriously argued, is known. It is better to give whole attention up to the little babies. To the eyes, to the ears, to the heart, they are yielding plenty of opportunity for observation.

"Here, Charley Matthews!" the nurse is crying to one of them. It is a name that has been heard before. We feel sure the tiny new owner of it will have some merry interest. "Here, Charley Matthews!" she repeats. "Charley, I say! Come!"

The little mite approaches. He is the smallest bit of a boy; the merest twig of independent babydom; overflowing with fun, or there would be nothing in a name, indeed, thoroughly conscious he has only been called to have his little hand taken, and his little hand shaken, and to give a smile, and to run away.

"Ah, Charley, Charley!" the nurse goes, as this last operation is merrily performed. "Ah!"—with a turn to give some historic or biographic explanation—"he's a regular little Tartar is that Charley! Regular!"

And so it seemed; for as the small creature uttered a lively crow, he executed a series of lively pirouettes, otherwise cavalry caracoles and demi-voltes; and a pale, bony boy, as big again as Charley, being too near, a pirouette took the pale, bony boy like a battering-ram, made him reel from the shock of it, spun him right down on to the floor—flat.

Howl—that was the result, in orthodox fortissimo. Howl, again—with the bony boy's limbs still outspread where they had been flung, in orthodox star-fish-like adhesiveness. And whilst the nurse was tilting up the bony boy erect again, did Charley Matthews turn back from his whirligig career to offer pity and consolation? Not for a moment. These came from a tiny Louey, a miniature brunette; distinguished by tiny brown eyes, by tiny brown curls, by tiny white teeth; by tiny olive forehead, and cheeks, and chin. And she was so tiny, was tiny Louey, she had no words to accompany her sympathy and solace. The heart of her had been formed the lengthy period of two years about, before her articulation, so this made her merely come, bringing her little figure, and her little smile; made her merely pop a marble into the bony boy's hand; smile up at him again, wait to see his face relax, and to hear his howl sub-

side, and then, quite contented, it made her, just as prettily, go her own way again.

Incongruously, with over-much diversity, the figure next in the foreground is a wide, carrot-headed little urchin, all lump and waddle; low comedy stamped on his grinning features, unmistakably.

"Now then, Paddy!" cries the nurse, as he butts himself into notice by a heavy attack upon her knee. "We're to look at you, are we, Paddy? Come along, then, show your tricks!"

Which Paddy did, to the extent of going plump down on to his plump hands, and of sticking up one plump little foot; an amount of topsy-turvydom that quite fulfilled his sense of acrobatic art, and gave his grins still greater width and comedy.

"It's capital!" cried the nurse, in lively praise. "Oh yes, Paddy, it's capital!"

Whereupon Paddy, full of the pleasure of commendation, as well as the pleasure of performance, waddled off into a group of other babies, and was lost to sight there.

But his very departure was as fruitful as his presence. As his small person was self-removed, there was displayed another little soul awaiting the nurse's friendly and approved attentions.

"Why!" the nurse said, amused. "If I didn't think there was somebody pulling at my dress! So it's you, little Dora, is it?"

By which time it was quite clear that it quite clearly was. And such a mite of a Dora! Such a meek, fragile, flaxen little thing! The fairest of figures; the most enticing patience and submission.

"Yes? Well?" went the nurse's question. "Eh?" And then she burst into the fullest comprehension. "A-a-ah! I see—of course. Dora has brought the rope, to skip; and Dora wants me to help her twist it. All right—come along."

Then a bright little smile shot over the sweet little patience, a little hand came out of its trustful hiding, and it was seen that Dora had a skipping-rope trailing behind her, and was in gentle glory at having gained her end.

"Come!" cried the nurse then; bending low to twist as Dora twisted, and to give to touch and time every accommodation. "Who'll skip, who'll jump over the rope? Make haste!"

A bunch of adventurous candidates

answered the invitation. A toddle brought them; conscious purpose shone upon them; they stood radiantly and valiantly by. Poor little souls, they were such tinies, such babies, the humblest attainment could only come out of their joy of intention and endeavour. Nurse and the little Dora had to hold the rope quite still and flat upon the boards in order to let them think of jumping; they had to think of jumping some seconds before they could muster courage to attempt it; as their bravest venture, they could only lift up one little foot and land it, lift up the other little foot and land it, getting that way across to the farther side of the rope, without any skip at all. But it was charming, out of its very smallness and simplicity. It was excellently good. From it there was seen what a little thing gives pleasure to a child; how delightfully a child meets that little pleasure; how delightfully a child owns that the pleasure is really there. No scorn of the skipping came from these tiny people; no decrying of the value of it, or complaint that it was not something different, or more. Only able to crow, and coo, and babble, their little hearts could feel ecstasy, and aim, and gratitude, newborn as their little hearts were; and what was better still, they were not ashamed of their pleasure, or of their showing it. It is possible that older people might, in this respect (if not in many others), learn something well worth learning from these mites.

And the same charm of enjoyment sprang from these little babies' toys. The toys were old, the toys were crushed, were stained, were broken; the toys were chipped, and dented, had been banged and beaten till they were almost shapeless stumps; but the children clutched them, nursed them, sang to them, dressed them up—were quite as satisfied and occupied, as if they had come, new, and smart, and costly, out of a high-priced bazaar. Some of these were headless horses, some were horseless heads; they were just as much "gee-gees" as when they had been whole; they were being galloped about on the especial foot-high and rimmed baby-table, to baby-imagination doing "gee-gee" duty unabridged. There were empty cotton-reels amongst these toys, also; there were humming-tops, dismasted and disarmed; there were the bulbs of wicker-work rattles, and be-headed dolls, and Kinder Garten cubes, and the boxes these had been in, and old

dolls' dresses, and old dolls' bodies—the sawdust substance of them gone, their bodies, to critical natures, only empty rag. It was of no consequence. These philosophic and contented Board-school babies fingered the odd old things, and built them up, and clattered them, and laid them low, and set them rolling, and tried to make them spin, with the same avidity and enjoyment as if shapelessness had been comeliness, as if damages had been the condition of being "spick and span." Observe, for proof, this tiny little girl at this corner of the little low table—Pamela, nurse calls her, a Pamela smart, with a necklace of gay blue beads—is rocking one of these dilapidated doll-bits, and singing it to sleep; this other tiny little girl, at this other corner of the table, is stretching some blue gauze round a horse-trunk—it is so many inches of flattened wooden cylinder, not an atom more—which horse-trunk, to her mind, will soon be a cherished baby for her to dandle, and fondle, and get to sleep as well. Further—this very begrimed horse-trunk undergoing metamorphosis into a baby, is about to be wrenched from its dresser by an envious Jimmy; the envious Jimmy is wrenching it spitefully, will have succeeded in wrenching it in another instant, and have run victoriously away, but that the nurse's watchfulness is not at fault here either, and she sees the action, and promptly stays it. Then there is a little Alice, pointed out as having been so eager and interested over another toy, a day or two before, she had bitten her opponent's finger till she had broken the tender skin; besides which, there is ample testimony of affection and admiration, of appropriation and ownership, in many a snatch and a counter-clutch, in many a sharp tussle to seize and to secure, in many a greedy gathering of more than little arms can hold, going on at intervals between plump baby, and delicate baby, between Saxon baby, and baby who is all nut-brown, to the right, to the left, far away, and in the centre, and all round.

Yet it must not be concluded that newer toys would be received by these Board-school babies with apathy or disdain. The sweepings of some richer babies' toy-cupboards would soon set such an absurd supposition at rest; to be sure of which, mark what occurs when the nurse takes from a cupboard a handful of marbles, and throws them amongst the little people in a carefully-directed shower. A merry

scamper follows; a merry shout; a merry clutch of conquest; a pertinacious peep after such of the marbles as have rolled themselves hopelessly under the shelter of the low bed; a clamorous cluster of little heads round a marble that has rolled itself into a just-fitting knot-hole in the planks of the floor. Down goes a broken toy that has previously been coaxed into doing duty for a tower; off toddles an Uncle Harry, aged two years and a half, with a plaster on his forehead; off toddles his nephew Dick, three months his senior, after him; off toddles, too, a tiny baby-girl in blue—there are twin-babies under her at home, nurse deploras, mere fragile baby as she is—and even a sparkle rises in the plaintive eyes of the only really dirty baby present. One little chap alone, overdone with sleepiness, and rolling his curly head from heavy side to side, remains unmoved among the mêlée; and to him nurse gives her cheery and resolute attention.

"Sammy! Sammy!" she cries, picking up the little man, and giving him a friendly toss. "Wake up, little Sammy. Come!"

But babyhood and summer weather, and perhaps much play and preposterous early rising, have given sleep so tight a hold on Master Sammy, that his eyelids still droop and his little head still rolls. Nurse, therefore, has to try again. This time she sings, and she lays Sammy flat upon her lap, insidiously:

Tickle Sammy,

she begins with an adroit touch:

Tickle Sammy on the knee,
Tickle Sammy on the knee,
If he laughs—no Sam is he!

And the little fellow does laugh; power of nurse's spell is excellently vindicated.

For nurse has an absolute and legitimate object in getting her little charges all on the alert and to the fore. It is their lunch time; and she wants toys, and all other objects but lunch, discarded for as many moments as baby-nature will permit. Her beginning is to clap her hands; and the babies, young as they are, understand it, and all look wakefully round.

"Get ready," she cries. "All of you sit down. Here it comes."

It was done in an instant. Every baby sat, waddling to its seat, toddling to its seat, running to it with a cheer, seating itself down plump just where it happened to be. Eleven of the babies, as it chanced,

seated themselves in a neat fat row, shoulder to shoulder, close up, their little fat hands patting up and down upon the low desk in front of them, as if they were tiny artisans tinily at work. It was no matter; there was nurse at her cupboard—a fortunate Mother Hubbard—there were all the baby-eyes fixed upon her and it, intently. Ah, but once more, that nurse's terrible wickedness! She did not distinguish between Johnny's piece of bread, which might have had dripping on it, and Tommy's piece of bread, which might have had treacle; she did not distinguish between Polly's crust, which might have been upper, and Sally's crust, which might have been kissing; she made no effort, it must be insisted, as crowning head of the indictments against her, to sort out those twenty-nine packets of queer household, wrapped up in those twenty-nine crumpled fragments of very queer newspaper, or even to count whether she had twenty-nine packages to match her twenty-nine babies; but with even hand, with a weighing eye, she broke her bread as she took it from her shelf, and she gave a bit to a baby, till she had given a bit to every baby—just the same all round. It was communism blatant, communism of the deepest, most sanguinary red. Was it that there came excuse because the babies sat and munched so busily—because the babies sat and sucked, in sweet serenity, making grave pursuit of crumbs that fell, and picking them up assiduously? To admit it would be to admit the principle, that the greatest happiness to the greatest number atones for everything; and in this a host of politicians see high danger. Let it be left alone.

Play succeeded to this arch treachery—play that had the same features as before the happy eating, and the same glad noise. At its end, it was the end of the morning's sitting also, and the nurse had to get the babies ready, that they might go.

"I get my toys away from them first," she said; "for babies as they are—and there's some babies you can love, and there's some babies you can't love, do what you will—they'd take all my toys away if I didn't look very sharp. They do take them, indeed, though I do look sharp; and I had ten little india-rubber balls the other day, those hard ones, and now I haven't one. They tuck them down their little bosoms, or they push them behind their little pinafores, or they hold

them tight—such things as marbles—in their little hands. Ah, it's a handful to look after so many of them properly!"

And it was a handful—when an order had been given to pick up the marbles, and they were being actively searched for and gradually brought in—to dress so many of them properly, especially with such bits of torn and flimsy garments to dress the little creatures in. Yet they helped to their dressing by every means in their small power. Jimmy knew Jimmy's hat, for instance, when Jimmy saw it; Charley knew Charley's; John knew John's. Annie held up her hand to claim Annie's neck-tie; Bessie was ready to receive Bessie's little cape. Then, as each child was equipped—an equipment that brought the wish that unoccupied young ladies would make it the fashion to go and sew new elastic on to little hats, and new buttons and strings on to little jackets and capes and cloaks—each little child betook itself to some low benches nurse had moved to near the door, and quietly took its seat on one of them. Each little baby quietly amused itself, too, till its big brother or sister came.

There was no doubt whose baby each was, every time the door was opened and a bonâ fide Board-school scholar was shown. Real claimants these, they had but to say, "Here I am," and hold out their arms, when the absolutely right baby held out its arms in turn, shuffled down and waddled off if it could, waited to be lifted up and kissed, if to shuffle and to waddle away were accomplishments it had not lived months enough to attain. All the little people were cleared off when only a few minutes had passed; over were the little greetings; comforted were the little arms clinging round elders' necks; divested were the small benches of all their baby-sitters, with the Board-school baby-room free to be thoroughly ventilated for its next assemblage when two hours had gone. And then, passing out again in a few more minutes into Angler's-gardens, N., where this experimental Board-school baby-room is to be found, it was easy to see the very same babies—or others curiously like them—seated upon the kerbs, blistering in the sun, playing with a bit of a discarded lettuce-leaf, with a chance pea-pod, a cork, a stick, some loose street-stones; and it was more than easy to see the value of the shelter and the care from which they had just come, and to wish that such shelter and such care

should soon be the universally-adopted rule. If this sketch should help to show unconverted Board-school managers how admirably the baby-room system is working, it will be well.

STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XII. FECI SURDUS.

ON a certain Monday, the 15th of June, Andrew Gordon, full of self-contempt for the triumph of Comus, had resolved to devote his life to the composition of a great work which should be the embodiment of all art thenceforth and for ever.

On Thursday, the 23rd of March—twenty-six years later—John March wrote at the end of the score "Finis." The work was done.

A work indeed! It was the whole of a strong man's head, and heart, and soul. It contained not a chord, not a note, that did not contain the best and the whole of them all. "Finis"—after the concentrated devotion of the zeal of youth, the sustained energy of manhood, the pathetic solemnity of the crowning labour of age. To write the word "Finis" was like self-inflicted death. Who cannot imagine for himself what it means? It was hard to convince himself that he could do no more. His first impulse was that of triumph—but his second was to feed the flames with his score. Pride, and love, and strange inconsistent hatred for the work of his own hands possessed him, and, till he lighted his pipe, made him tremble and turn cold with the feeling that, at last, the one work of his whole life was done. Henceforward the score, which was himself, was delivered from his own hands into those of destiny.

What had not the work meant for him? It was as if every note had been a drop of his heart's blood, every chord a piece of his brain—as if, now that all was over, he had no heart left and no brain. It was as if he had transmuted himself into the pile of manuscript, which lay—finished—before him. It had been the whole of his outward life, and the whole of a hitherto unrecognised inner life besides. He could remember the origin of every phrase, and renew the labour by which he

had reduced the inspiration of passing moods of feeling into one consistent whole, in which no slightest trace of any passing mood might be discerned. For the work was to represent bloodless and pulseless art, not to reflect the man; whatever blood and pulse it contained was to be purely and utterly its own.

Did he regard it with affection or with hatred, as he sat over it and smoked slowly, and turned over the pages lingeringly? To answer that, one must learn to distinguish between self-love and self-hate—which no man has ever yet done, or ever will do. Who, when middle age is passing, can bear to dwell with approval upon every note and every chord of the score that his life's hand has written? Only, most lives are written with pencil upon slates, that are sponged over from time to time; his in sounds, fixed upon art henceforth indelibly.

Hitherto, ever since he had first met Noëmi on the Corso, he had treated, or rather looked back upon, life as a dream, from which the Score alone stood out as the one reality in a world of shadows. But now, from the pages before him, looked out the ghost of one evening when he saw the then unknown name of "Mademoiselle Clari" among the theatrical announcements of the gazette for that day.

He used now and then to go to the opera, out of a musician's habit, though he never took his wife with him. She had been consecrated to art. And surely if any man ever had a right to order any woman's life, it was he. He had taken her from the Ghetto, and worse—from Il Purgatorio and La Purgatoria. He had trained her to be Empress of Art—which is higher and more glorious, surely, than to be a mere queen of song. He had given her a woman's full life instead of a slave's. He had given her luxury for penury, and had only asked in exchange that she should live happily and peacefully; that she might, at the cost of a little labour, be the grand instrument for ensuring the triumph of artistic right over inartistic wrong. That was his point of view; and it was just, and generous also, beyond all question.

As for who Mademoiselle Clari was, he cared no more than he knew. One does not distinguish butterfly from butterfly, and it might well be that many a prima donna was famous without his knowing anything about her, even by name. When he went to the San Gennaro that evening,

it was with the expectation of hearing a voice, and nothing else—and that not necessarily a voice worth hearing.

The eyes, indeed, never see but what they expect to see. They expected to see Lucrezia Borgia, and they saw her. But no disguise could deceive his ears.

There was but one great voice on earth for him; and he heard it now—it, and no other. A voice never has a twin, even if in other respects Noëmi might have her double somewhere. The second note was enough to tell him that all his precautions had been in vain—that marriage itself had not proved a bond strong enough to keep Noëmi out of the whirlpool, and his work with her. It was more than hard—it was cruel. The commonest gratitude should have been enough to make Noëmi gladly and thankfully docile, even if she proved unable to catch one breath of his inspired enthusiasm for the triumph of the cause.

He did not exaggerate what had happened. It was not merely that his wife had openly defied him. His heart had unwittingly begun to know her well enough, and had already learned that he had to deal with an instrument, glorious indeed, but with no more genius or enthusiasm of its own than a violin; that such soul as she had was no more connected with her voice than it was with her eyes. He had been building his house all this while upon the sand—upon diamond-dust, rather. How had she come there?—how had she found means to defy him and art together thus insolently, face to face? But it mattered not how—she was there, and he had lost her.

He could do nothing, however, but sit and listen to her, in the temper of a great artist who hears his favourite violin degraded by base hands into an instrument of torture. His own teaching was being turned against him, and would henceforth, he knew very well, be used to ensure the triumph of the wrong over the right—he had been devoting years of patient zeal to arming the enemy. He had discovered her, trained her, consecrated her for worse than nothing—he had let loose a very Queen of Harpies.

And then, and not till then, he knew that he loved her with all his heart and soul.

It was a terrible discovery; and, but for her rebellion, it would never have been made. The man had never loved a

woman in his life before; and though he was her husband, he had never suspected that it was for love he had married her. He did not even know how to love, or to interpret what he felt, or to distinguish love from anger and scorn. Self-contempt poisoned the discovery. What was he to do? Accept facts—give way to human passion—and throw his purpose to the winds?

Many a far wiser man would have had no doubt about the matter, and would have transmuted the poison into wholesome wine by giving it full heart-room. But then, it is not wise men who consciously devote their lives to anything but themselves. Nobody ever thought Mahomet, or Columbus, or Palissy the potter, a wise man. It was not of his will, but of his nature, that if his heart was ever to come between himself and his art-conscience, then his heart must go, self-hating, to the wall. It was natural he should love her, for she was in effect the work of his own hands. Whatever soul she had she owed to him. As he sat in the theatre and felt her voice thrill through his veins with unknown fire, he dreamed for the first time of a life apart from art, such as a man may lead. Was it not more than enough to have looked for a voice and to have found a whole woman?

Little knew Noëmi what was passing in her husband's mind. But it is not wonderful that his dull frown failed to paralyse her as she half hoped and half feared. No wonder that, if it had any mesmeric influence at all, the newly-discovered feeling that hid itself under the frown inspired her. At last he could bear no longer to sit there, and feel himself falling into slavery. He did not wait for her last note to escape from the house into the open air.

What had happened? How could he tell? Was it he who was the machine after all, to whom she had given a soul, and not, as he had fancied, she who had received one from him? And what sort of soul would he receive from her! There was nothing, he felt, between her becoming all his, and his becoming all hers; and to become all hers meant the sacrifice of all he held worth living for, for the sake of what—so he told himself—was a contemptible passion, though the girl was his wife and the mother of his child. What had he done? He had, for art's sake, consciously sacrificed name, fame,

fortune; he had hidden himself from the world that he might bring a living voice into full harmony with his life's purpose; he had thought nothing of marrying a stray girl from the Ghetto, and cutting himself off from all other ties; and now it was all to end in his—loving her.

And he was her husband, after all. He had no more power over her, he knew, now that she had once escaped into the fatal atmosphere of the unreformed stage. She had never understood him; and now she had placed an impassable gulf between herself and the least chance of comprehending him. His waste of life had been evil enough, but the shadow of love was absolutely terrible. The only course open to him was to break the mockery of a bond that held them together, and to escape from the shadow while there was yet time.

Not only must he fly, but at once; he must not wait for her to return from the opera, flashed with insolent triumph, to conquer him twice over. He could not trust his own strength; love always feels like weakness when it comes with shame. It mattered not what else might happen. So far as she was concerned, she would be left free to lead her own life in her own way—prime donne are not in the habit of starving. And, as for himself, all he had to think of was his work and his mission—he would have felt the same if it was a question of saving his soul. What is a man's trumpery soul, he would have asked, compared with his work? Let him do his work; there are plenty of souls to be saved without the need of mine; and if it's lost, what is one more or less among so many?

So much for himself and for her. And that would have been enough, had it not been for a third party to the bargain—the bambina.

The pursuit of art certainly becomes a complex business, when nature takes it into her head to interfere.

It will have become clear by this time, that Andrew Gordon, however skilful an artist—and even supposing him to have genius—was nearly as ignorant of nature as if he had never been born. It is true that the Lancashire brooks had told him a few musical secrets; but he had learned just as many from his father's spinning-jennies. In short, he had come to regard the great round world as a gigantic musical-box, and all that

therein is, himself included, as so many stops and keys. Nor did he stand alone in his view. Millions fully believe it to be nothing but a colossal marketplace; thousands treat it as a public-house bar. There are hundreds of worthy men, artists in their way, who can only regard it as a sack of soot, or a heap of dust to be carted off the premises; and thousands upon thousands are persuaded in their inmost minds, that men and women, nay, even the sky and the sea, were made to be written and rhymed about—and for no other purpose in the world. At any rate, Andrew Gordon's craze was no greater than any of these, but it was no less; and when he found himself in his progress suddenly face to face with undisguised, sadly inartistic nature, he felt himself in the strange waters of an unknown sea. Love had revealed itself to him as a terror, as the ruin and destruction of his whole theory of life, and of all that it meant to him. How would he be able to face the desert of laborious life that lay before him, without the daily companionship of the girl who had become an essential part of more than his life—of his life's work—and who had now gone out of it for ever? For it never occurred to him that any course was open to him but escape, at any cost, from all risk of life with her. The man who had been capable of throwing glory from him as if it were a loathsome weed, was just as able to treat the flower of love after the same fashion—more especially when he had mistaken the flower, and when it had turned out to be a full-blown red rose, instead of the expected camellia, that has no perfume of its own.

But still—all this is not the bambina.

Once more nature had stopped the way; and by no possibility could art be induced to decide the matter. By no possibility could his work or his purpose be affected, this way or that, by the poor little creature lying cradled at home, while its father and mother were diligently occupied in making themselves miserable. What was he to do with what God had given him, as surely as brains and a heart—though the latter, indeed, had come a little twisted out of the mould? He had never had much time for looking at the child, but he could not help looking at her now. She had her mother's eyes; it was a strange, weird, pathetic sight to see the eyes of Noëmi looking out from the grave face of a baby.

What was he to do with her? It was not so much love as indignant pity that showed him the future of a prima donna's child, and that prima donna—Noëmi. The bambina, and the bambina's eyes, became strangely important things to him, now that he was about to drive the mother out of his life for ever. That Noëmi was already in the whirlpool of all evil, he was assured; she was in other hands than his; and what better was to be expected from a Ghetto Jewess, who spent her life in praying for a shower of diamonds, and had left even her baby untended to gain them? Well, let her go—his consciousness of loving her only deepened his anger and his scorn. But he could not find it in his heart to let her eyes go with her.

"She has all she wants," he thought harshly. "But she shall not kill two lives instead of one. No, nor one even. I am but as I was before I saw her, and was fool enough to mistake a voice for a soul. I have not lost many years; I can begin again. But it was I who have done the mischief; if I let her ruin an innocent life, the sin will be mine; and it will be more than a sin. No—whatever comes, your mother shall have no child of mine."

It was of that evening that John March was thinking as his eyes watched the last crowning chord of the great score—written, at last, from beginning to end. It was strange to feel that it was actually, absolutely done; the great work of twenty-five years, that had absorbed his brain, filled his heart, pervaded his life; for whose sake he had surrendered fame, and thrown away love, and had dreamed and drudged until he had become a mere fossil. And the voice that should by right have sung it—the hateful voice from which he had fled, lest he should love it too well—came back with the last chord to his deaf ears, that would never hear one note even of his own music—well, his ears would never hear the songs he had made for her sung by any meaner voice than Noëmi's.

Had it been worth giving up the whole of a man's life, even his daughter's love, for the sake of music that he would never

hear? He had never thought of such a question before—but—now that it was done?

Well, it was done. The music could never be unmade, nor the years brought back again. Fame might come to him at last with honour; but love he had killed with his own hands. But he would give up twice five-and-twenty years, and twice that, and go through them all twice over in the self-same way, if but once the musician's sense could be restored to him, and he could hear with the ears of his body the triumph of art, and the singing of the whips as the money-changers were scourged from the temple.

But that would never be. Worn out, deaf, unloved and forgotten, he would go out of the world; but he had done his work, and that would live after him. Once more he took up the pen, and wrote at the end of the work—

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped . . . for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. Feci Surdus, Andreas Gordon."

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